

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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ONLY A BUSINESS MAN.

BY MAY DRYDEN.

CHAPTER III.

LATE as he had been at work over-night, Gordon Fenchurch started very early in the morning for the office.

It was Tuesday morning, market-day, and the streets were crowded with men hurrying to their places of business. The weather was wet and very misty; a slowly-descending drizzle of dirty rain made a dreary scene drearier.

Every face into which Gordon looked wore the same imprint of careworn anxiety; every figure told, in the narrow chest and drooping shoulders, the same tale of long hours of labour in a confined space, and of a load of care making premature old men of the bearers.

The young man had been thinking earnestly as he walked up the long street that led from the suburb in which he lived to the town. Now a sudden disgust for the life which he saw around him, and on which he purposed entering, seized him. Why should he condemn himself to an existence full of care and worry—to an existence wherein success could only be bought by the sacrifice, for many years at least, of almost all the usual delights of youth?

Entering business meant much harder work for him than it did for most young men. It did not mean attending for a certain number of hours in the day at the office of an indulgent father, doing routine work under the direction of a superior upon whose shoulders all responsibility lay. It meant for him taking up, now at once, the whole burden of the large business which before had been managed almost entirely by his father. Young as

he was, he had already gained much experience under that dearly-loved father. He knew that mentally he was able to take up his burden. But was he able physically and morally? And was he willing? His courage, which had been so high the night before, failed him suddenly.

In spite of his elder brother's opinion of him, Gordon had many delicate and refined tastes. He loved music, books, and painting. These he must now lay on one side until he had lost, perhaps, all capacity for enjoying them. How could he do it? How offer up, as a sacrifice to business, what he felt to be in many respects the highest and best part of his nature? More than that—in spite of his firm resolutions of last night, with all the aid to be obtained from his compact with Clarence, was he strong enough, wise enough, good enough to plunge into business life, with all its intricacies, temptations, and difficulties, and to succeed in it, and through all to keep his conscience clear and living, and his hands clean?

Question after question thrust itself before his mind; his brain was working so fast that he felt almost as though he were losing control over it. He reached the office-door, but, instead of entering, passed it, and turned down by the Exchange, walking faster and faster, his eyes now bent upon the ground, his head slightly on one side, his hands clasped loosely behind his back.

Oh, to be rid for ever of all this toil, and worry, and vexation of spirit! Would it not be easier far, and better, too, to leave the town at once—aye, to leave England? That was a good idea. He would seek some land far away where there were fewer people—some happy, peaceful land where he might live, quiet, and alone, and free, earning daily enough to buy his daily bread. Free? Yes; from

chains whose galling weight he knew had crushed wiser and stronger men than himself—chains which, if once they were hung upon him, he might never lay down again on this side of the grave. Yes; he would be free.

Suddenly he felt a hand laid on his shoulder, and looked up; Staniland and Mark stood before him. Both looked grave, sad, and anxious. Staniland especially so.

"Gordon," said the latter, "where are you hurrying to so fast? Have you forgotten how much business we have to do to-day?" Then, catching sight of his younger brother's intensely troubled face, he added: "It is too bad of us to lean on you so, is it not? You, the youngest of us all. But then, you see, you are the business man of the family. We should not know what to do without you. We two came to that conclusion last night, did we not, Mark?"

"Yes," said Mark. "We have decided to give you a share in the business, Gordon, if you like the arrangement."

"And Everett?" said Gordon.

"If Everett does not like it he may go. We want no more of his mismanagement. We two are competent to decide."

A brief pause of hesitation. Now, if ever, the step must be taken which would make a "business-man" of Gordon for his life, or leave him free to go where he would, and do what he would, with no needs to care for save his own. The struggle in his mind was sharp but short, and he answered soon, very, very quietly:

"Thank you. I accept your offer."

"An odd fellow," whispered Staniland to Mark as they entered the office. "I thought he would have been overjoyed, and he does not seem to care a bit about it."

Everett was waiting for his brothers, composed, dignified, and gentlemanly of demeanour as usual. He chose to be calmly and severely indignant, and somewhat sarcastic on the subject of Gordon's promotion, whereon Staniland lost his temper, and reproached him with being the cause of all the confusion into which their father's affairs had fallen. It required the use of all the tact and patience which Gordon possessed to keep the peace between the two so far as to allow of some reasonable settlement being arranged.

Mark was on Gordon's side so far as that went. He did not like quarrelling, it was so uncomfortable; he preferred

that everything should go on smoothly, without any trouble to anybody. He was sorry Everett and Staniland could not agree. For himself he was willing to agree to anything, and said so good-naturedly enough. He was little better than a fool about business affairs. Really, as Gordon told Clarence in the evening, "willing as he was to make himself pleasant and to be helpful, Mark had not sufficient business capacity to manage a toffee-shop."

All day long the four brothers and their solicitor were at work striving to disentangle the confusion into which the family affairs had drifted. The three eldest would have left some part of the business until the morrow, but though Everett talked of an appointment with a celebrated antiquarian, and Mark made piteous allusions to a pair of woodcocks spoiling at home, Gordon kept them at work with merciless persistency, so that before night they arrived at a definite conclusion as to what was to be done.

Everett was to leave the business altogether, he declining to work with Gordon. The fact was he knew that he would be forced to follow Gordon's lead if he remained in the business, and though he had less business-knowledge, he had more self-will than Mark and Staniland, and did not like the idea of being second to anyone. A large sum of money was to be found for him, wherewith he might set up in business for himself. He was tired of cotton manufacturing, he said, and intended now to turn his attention to silk. Gordon, foreseeing fresh difficulties, tried earnestly, but in vain, to induce him to remain in his old position.

Everett was obstinate, and thus Staniland became the nominal head of the old and respectable firm of Fenchurch Brothers, Gordon taking his place as junior partner thereof.

The old lawyer shook his head gravely as he walked home that night.

"Fenchurch Brothers have got into very low water," said he to his partner next day. "The old man is dead. There are heavy money embarrassments, and there is only one of the sons who has any common-sense at all."

"Which is that one?" asked the other.

"Gordon—the youngest—as shrewd and hard-headed a young fellow as ever I saw. For reasons best known to himself, his father did not even mention him in his will. He has prevailed upon his brothers, though, to make him a partner—not very

difficult to do, you know. Mark is a good-natured fool, and Staniland does not understand the business. Everett would have kept the lad out if he could. As it is, he goes off by himself."

When Gordon got home that evening, Clarence soon found out that something more than usual was troubling him, and presently won him to tell her all that had passed during the day. He did not omit to mention the struggle he had gone through in the morning.

"I feel," said he, in an utterly helpless, hopeless tone, "have felt ever since, as though I had committed a moral suicide."

Clarence did her best for him, but doubt had seized the young heart which had been so courageous the day before—doubt as to how far his action had been the result of unselfish and upright motives; how far the outcome of mere sordid promptings; and presently the sister declared she would talk to him of business no longer, lest he should end by imagining himself a miser devoured by the greed of gain.

CHAPTER IV.

IN his exquisitely-appointed study, Everett Fenchurch was sitting on the night which found his brother so troubled and anxious in mind. Everett, too, was a little troubled, and it worried him. He did not like to be troubled, and almost thought the Providence, with whom he was generally so well content, was using him ill when he could not spend an evening quietly and happily amongst his books. He had a new edition of Horace's Odes in his hand, and had already found more than one mistake in the editor's notes; but he could not enjoy the glow of undeniable superiority as he usually did, for the Horace was unpaid for. Everett could not forget that the bookseller's bill had come in that day, that the Horace was but a small item in it amongst many larger ones, and that, moreover, it was headed by a formidable "Account rendered." By a natural sequence of ideas, his thoughts wandered to other and larger bills than the book-seller's, and they made him feel uncomfortable. As he turned the leaves of his book, his mind was busily employed in considering how these bills might be paid with a minimum of discomfort and self-sacrifice to himself, for his creditors were beginning to point out to him somewhat forcibly that they must be paid. It was very hard, he said to himself, as he glanced round on his treasures of art and literature, and reflected

painfully that, if some way were not soon found of satisfying those greedy, money-loving creditors, the treasures would very soon be his no longer. He knew that it was quite hopeless to attempt to get more money from the firm at present. There was none to be had in that quarter, and he knew no friend from whom he could borrow. He had exhausted his available friends, and each one of them supposed that he was Everett's sole creditor, and that the occasion on which he had borrowed from him was the only one on which he had been short of money. Besides, there could be no doubt that it was a most uncomfortable thing to be in debt, especially when people seemed to feel that they would like to be paid.

Everett could only see one way out of his difficulty; he had seen it a long time and shrank from taking it, for he loved a bachelor life and bachelor comfort, and the only way of retaining his comfort now seemed to be to give up his bachelorhood. He had no need to be modest about the matter; there was no doubt that he would be able to find a wife easily. In fact he knew of the very woman to suit him; a religious, cultivated lady, with whom marriage would not be ridiculous, and one, moreover, who adored him—a dependent, easily-managed creature, too, he believed, such as a woman ought to be, and with a sum of money at her disposal, as he happened to know, suitable to his debts and habits.

Before he went to bed that night Everett Fenchurch had, with a sigh, made up his mind to marry. In the course of the next two days he proposed and was accepted—in the course of the next two months he was married.

His brothers, inexpressibly relieved, made him handsome wedding-presents, and hoped that they had shifted the family Old Man of the Sea on to the shoulders of a new Sindbad. For a time, at any rate, they were left in peace.

CHAPTER V.

IN a little village, about twenty miles away from the large town of Homcester, lived a large family of young people, by name Carfield. The eldest daughter of this family, Phoebe, retired to her room one day in sheer despair, feeling that nothing but seclusion for a while from the noisy and perturbed little world below, could restore her ruffled temper to its normal condition of calm and patient cheerfulness.

She did not often give way beneath her domestic troubles, but to-day they had been too much for her, and they had all arisen, as they very frequently did, out of her second brother's poetical temperament.

Daniel Carfield was about twenty years old, and he suffered from a tendency to poetry, or rather his sisters suffered from it, and he enjoyed it. Mrs. Carfield, he considered, was the only person who properly appreciated him, or would have properly appreciated him had she possessed sufficient capacity so to do. She was very proud of her darling boy's "delicate, sensitive, poetical temperament," but the girls had learned, by bitter experience, that a tendency to poetry included, in Daniel's case, a great many other tendencies, most of them very inconvenient ones—as, for example, a tendency to grumble at and despise all his surroundings, a tendency to have a very delicate appetite, and a tendency to lie in bed late in the morning. It was this last peculiarity of a poetical temperament which had so particularly aggravated Phoebe on the Monday in question.

The Carfields were in the not very remarkable position of a very large family dependent on a very small income. That being the case, it was not likely that the grown-up members of the family should be able to take life very easily. Nor, excepting Daniel, did they. He was thoroughly selfish, and so had a great advantage over his brothers and sisters. A really selfish man can generally manage to make himself more comfortable than those around him. Moreover, the principal pleasure of his life was to nurse a grievance, and he rarely found himself unhappy for want of one. As for Luke, the eldest son, and Phoebe, circumstances had never been very kind to them. They had been forced to assume responsibility at an age when properly-brought-up boys and girls still divide their thoughts between lessons and play. They had, however, faced their struggle bravely, being mentally and physically strong and healthy, and filled with a courageous determination never to be worsted in the battle of life. So far they had held their own, and Luke was now five-and-twenty, there being twenty years between him and the youngest of his seven brothers and sisters. All the responsibility of bringing up this large family fell upon Luke and Phoebe, for, as far as practical matters were concerned, Mr. and Mrs. Carfield were little

better than nonentities, two more members of the family, less easily managed than the children, because it was necessary to pay them at least an outward deference.

They had married when Mr. Carfield was barely twenty-one. His income and her fortune together amounted to about two hundred and fifty pounds a year then. In their eyes it seemed to be riches untold. Two people, they felt convinced, might live quite luxuriously upon it. So they began housekeeping, never considering that their family might increase. It did increase; but there was no corresponding increase in Mr. Carfield's salary, and plenty for two proved to be penury for ten.

Luke and Phoebe had scrambled through their childhood with very little assistance from anyone. He went to work as soon as it was possible, and she meantime struggled on at home, considering only how she might best manage so as to make both ends meet, and how the younger boys might be decently educated. She had her day-dreams, but they were very different from the romantic air-castles of most young girls. She had a very moderate idea of what happiness would be, looking forward only to a time when all the boys would be out in the world, and when Matty would be married—a time when Luke and she might live together in a little house, not being forced to work hard any more, and having time to talk and read.

Phoebe did not know what society was, had never been at a ball in her life, had never learned to dance. Her ignorance did not trouble her. She had never wished for gaiety for herself. When she thought about such things at all it was only to imagine how pleasant it would be to dress Matilda prettily, like other girls, and send her out to enjoy herself. It seemed hard to this little old woman of twenty-two that her younger sister should not have those pleasures of youth which she herself had never enjoyed.

Luke and Daniel were in the same house of business with their father—Daniel quite at the bottom of the ladder, and likely to remain there.

He was fond of asserting proudly that his nature was not adapted to the mechanical routine work of a merchant's office.

Luke had long since risen above his father, a circumstance which gave the young man far more concern than it did the old one, who was quite content to see

his son the principal supporter of his family.

Mr. Carfield was remarkable only in one way. He was of extremely venerable appearance, with an abundance of long white hair, and a flowing beard. He was tall and very handsome, and his face habitually wore a grave sweetness of expression most attractive to strangers.

Mrs. Carfield was an invalid—a pretty, feeble, untidy woman, with a querulous voice and an ever-ready supply of tears. It was sometimes suspected that she had assumed her rôle of invalid in order to cover her undeniable idleness; but I think that more probably her spirit had sunk under a weight of care taken up when she was far too young to support it. She rarely concerned herself about any household arrangements save when they interfered with her comfort or Daniel's, when she relieved her mind, such as it was, by finding fault with Phoebe.

Such were some of the actors in the drama which poor Phoebe, sitting alone in her bedroom, wearily reviewed again and again, longing the while for Luke to come home that she might pour out her troubles to him, and receive from him the comfort and help he never failed to bestow.

It had been washing-day, and she and Matty had, as usual, risen at six that they might begin the day's work in good time.

Punctually at a quarter to eight the family breakfast was ready. Phoebe carried to her mother's room the tea and toast she took before rising, and Luke and his father came downstairs. Luke always helped his sister by bringing down the younger ones for her. Phoebe saw the schoolboys off to school, and took Bunyan into the nursery, where he would be quite happy until dinner-time, she and Matilda looking in upon him now and then to see that he was all right. He was a sunny-tempered little creature, and already learning to depend upon himself for amusement.

They had all finished breakfast, and Mrs. Carfield, muffled in a dusky white woollen shawl, had taken her usual place in an armchair close to the fire, which her chilly nature necessitated all the year round. Old Ann, the one servant of the household, had long since retired to the cellar, whence a moist smell of soap-and-water filled the house, and betokened surely what her occupation was. Matilda had donned her apron, and Phoebe her thimble, and still Daniel did not appear.

Matilda, always annoyed by irregularity and delay, especially on Monday morning, grew impatient, and declared she would wait no longer for him. Daniel must be content to go without his breakfast, if he could not manage to come down in time for it.

"A little fasting would do him good," she remarked, as she piled cups and saucers upon the tray; a sentiment wherein Luke fully concurred, but which drew a few feeble tears from Mrs. Carfield, as she moaned over their unkindness to their poor brother.

"The only one of all my children," said she, "who has the divine spark of genius implanted in his bosom."

Phoebe hastened to find for her mother her only consolation in such dire affliction—a volume of the novel which was always kept on hand for her.

Matty retorted:

"On the whole, mother, I think it a very good thing that he is the only one of us so afflicted."

She cleared away the plates with an energy that made them rattle again, while Phoebe cleaned a spot from Luke's well-worn and rather shabby coat, and brushed her father's hat.

Mr. Carfield gave his daughter a kiss, and went off quite undisturbed by the little domestic fracas. He never troubled himself further about his wife's tears, than to wonder mildly that she cared to disturb herself so continually.

But Luke shook his fist at the stairs and said:

"Shall I go and haul him out, Phoebe? I will directly, if you like."

"Oh no, Luke; it would only make a disturbance, and perhaps send mother into a fit of hysterics. I have no time for that this morning. But I am so glad, my dear old boy, that you have not a spark of genius."

"Don't you think I have? Just a little, Phoebe?" asked he rather wistfully.

"Not a twinkle, dear, and it is such a mercy."

So Luke went off to his work, feeling, as he often did feel, that he must do duty for himself and Daniel too, leaving that estimable youth at home to try and fan his spark of genius into a flame.

Daniel, his mother said, was delicate, and must never go to work unless he felt able. When he did not feel able to work, therefore, he remained at home, writing bad verses and worrying his sisters, a course of

proceedings only tolerated by his principal, Mr. Hooley, for Luke's sake, he having a great respect and liking for the young man, and being unwilling to add another burden to those he already bore. On this particular morning Matty found that she had saved herself no trouble by not allowing breakfast to wait for Daniel. He came down about ten o'clock, with a face wherein Phoebe perceived signs of one of his most exacting moods.

"What is the meaning of this disgusting steam all through the house?" was his first remark.

"Washing-day, Dan," said Phoebe pleasantly. "Never mind; it can't be helped, and steam is not unwholesome."

"Indeed, I am sure it is. I can feel it affecting my chest already," and Dan gave what he meant to be a hollow cough. "Why do you allow this sort of thing, mother?" he went on querulously.

"Don't ask me," said Mrs. Carfield, throwing up her hands despairingly. "I'm not mistress of the house. I'm only your father's wife. I've said every washing-day for these two years that it would only be decent and respectable to put the washing out. But I'm nobody; nobody ever pays any attention to anything I say."

"Now, mother," said Matilda, who had just paid a flying visit to the parlour, "what is the good of talking like that? If you've said the washing ought to go out every Monday for two years, you've said it often enough, I'm sure. You know we can't afford it, and we shall not be able to afford it either while Daniel moons away half his time at home here, instead of working like a man. So let us hear no more about the washing, pray."

So saying, Matilda disappeared, leaving Mrs. Carfield silenced for the time. Daniel took a seat by the table, and putting his head down on his arms, groaned ominously.

"What is the matter, my darling?" asked his mother anxiously.

"My head, mother—it is extremely bad. Could I not have a cup of tea?"

"Of course. Phoebe, go and bring your brother a cup of tea, directly, and a slice of dry toast."

"No butter, Phoebe," said Daniel, raising his head; "unless you have some better than I had yesterday."

Now Phoebe was sewing, and it was absolutely necessary that her work should be finished that morning; but her reluctance to obey her mother really arose less

from her dislike of the trouble given her than from the knowledge that it would be quite useless for her to attempt to procure tea and toast at that time of day.

Her reply was:

"Matilda is using the fire. Could you not eat bread-and-butter this morning, Daniel, and have some milk with it?"

"Never mind me," said Daniel in a deeply injured tone. "I can do without anything." And down went his head again.

"For shame!" said Mrs. Carfield. "How I do hate such partiality! If it were Luke wanted a little bit of attending to, you'd be rushing about everywhere to get him what he liked, and poor Daniel may not have such a simple thing as a cup of tea. Go and get it for him at once, or I will go myself."

Phoebe knew that of all things she disliked, Matilda objected most to seeing Mrs. Carfield in the kitchen, and that on busy days she could never control her temper under the infliction. So, being anxious to avert, if possible, any further disagreement, she rose and timidly put her head in at the kitchen door. She never invaded the kitchen rashly when Matty was cooking.

"Go away," growled the latter; "I am busy."

"But, Matty—Daniel has come down."

"I saw him. I was surprised. I thought he must have concluded to stay in bed all day."

"He wants some tea and toast."

Matty turned round. She was stirring something in a saucepan over the fire. Her cheeks were red, and her eyes bright with the heat.

She made an undeniably pretty picture, and her pink cotton apron, with its big bib, was not by any means an unbecoming dress. But the pretty cook was obviously cross, and she shook her long spoon threateningly at her sister as she made answer:

"Phoebe Carfield! Do you mean to say that that misguided boy really wants tea and toast? At eleven o'clock on a Monday morning!"

"Not a doubt about it, Matty."

"Then inform him, my dear, with my love, that I regret that I am at present unable to satisfy his wants."

"Now, be good, Matty. How can I tell him that? He has a headache."

"Of course he has. You soft-hearted little goose, did you ever know Daniel

come down late for breakfast without a headache? But if you are afraid, take my apron and stir this. Don't you let it burn, and I will go and look after Master Dan."

Matty disappeared, and, with many misgivings, Phoebe took her place at the fire. In two or three minutes she was back again, followed by Mrs. Carfield, who, talking vehemently all the time, removed the saucepan from the fire and replaced it with the kettle. Poor Matty retired to the cellar, to try to quench her wrath amongst the soapsuds, and Phoebe followed to attempt to soothe her, leaving the kitchen in possession of the enemy.

Of course there was no pudding for dinner that night, and the cold mutton was unrelieved by any daintier dish. Mr. Carfield was cross, the boys grumbled, and little Bunyan lifted up his voice and lamented bitterly.

Phoebe comforted the children with gingerbread, and heartily wished she could find the same balm effectual in her own case.

She could not guess, our poor Phoebe, that even now the clouds were lifting on her horizon.

BALLOONING.

CERTAIN French writers—not all—claim for France the discovery of everything, without exception, that has turned out useful to civilised humanity. They do not go quite so far as to pretend that their ancestors found out fire and its powers, although their cooks certainly obtain from them very agreeable and nutritive results, nor do they dispute with Sancho Panza whether they shall bless a Spaniard or a Frenchman for having invented sleep; neither would they rob such men as Newton or Priestly of whatever small merits may be their due; but navigation by steam, and other giants' strides on the way of progress, are maintained to be undoubtedly French in their origin and application.

Nevertheless, the French have quite enough good marks set down indisputably to their credit to keep them from denying to their neighbours some initiative in these important matters. The fact is that most great inventions have been made piecemeal. Distinct individuals, and distinct nations, have each contributed their quota of improvements, thus effecting a gradual progress from the primordial idea to its perfected completion.

No doubt the early suspicion of utilitarian possibilities has been conceived in France, as elsewhere; the hint being allowed to drop without producing immediate fruit. In the last century, for instance, the electric telegraph—I might say the submarine cable—was almost discovered on the Calais jetty; but nothing came of it at the time. But to one novel mode of communication and transport, which, however, as yet, has more amused than benefited mankind—namely, ballooning—the French have an undoubted right, as absolutely and unquestionably their own.

It came about in this wise: Pierre Montgolfier, a wealthy paper manufacturer at Vidalon-lès-Annoncey, unlike most Frenchmen, had a large family of children, two only of whom, Joseph and Etienne, became known to fame. Joseph, born in 1740, was of an independent spirit, and averse to restraint. At the age of thirteen he ran away from school at Tournon, and fed on the shellfish he found on the seashore. Sent back again in a pitiable state, he detested the literary tasks imposed on him, but was devoted to mathematics, physical science, and chemistry. Making his escape a second time, he lived by selling Prussian-blue and sundry drugs of his own manufacture and composition. Etienne, on the contrary, five years younger, was a model pupil, who grew up into an accomplished man of the world, stronger in literature than in science.

Joseph was the one who first conceived the idea of a balloon. Some say it was suggested by seeing his mother's petticoat, while being dried on an osier basket over a charcoal fire, suddenly rise from its support and mount to the ceiling. Another story is that Joseph, sitting by his fireside at Avignon, was meditating the means of getting into Gibraltar, then besieged by the English, when he saw a sheet of paper, thrown on the fire, carried up the chimney, together with the smoke. The truth is, that Joseph Montgolfier, who had studied and measured the dilatation of gases, knew that air, sufficiently warmed, becomes twice as light as before, and is able, in rising, to carry with it the envelope which contains it. A trial on a small scale succeeded. He took his brother Etienne into his confidence and partnership, and made, on Thursday, the 5th of June, 1783, before the States General of the Vivarais, the grand experiment which conferred on them a world-wide celebrity.

His aerostat, made of linen cloth lined with paper, sewed on to and supported by a network of string, was nearly spherical, and rather more than one hundred and ten feet in circumference. At the bottom a wooden frame supported the opening by which the "gas" was introduced. The machine was able to raise and carry a weight of, say, five hundred pounds English. When the eight men who held it down, at a given signal let it go, it rose with accelerated velocity at first, but less rapidly towards the close of the ascent, to the height of about one thousand toises, or something like six thousand feet. A breeze, scarcely perceptible at the surface of the earth, carried it some twelve hundred toises from the starting-point. It remained only ten minutes up in the air; the loss of "gas" through needle-holes and other imperfections preventing a longer stay aloft. The wind was southerly, with rain. The machine descended so gently that it broke neither the branches nor the stakes of the vines amongst which it fell. And this was the first balloon-ascent ever performed that we know of, since the world was encircled by an atmosphere capable of permitting it.

Note that it was Montgolfier himself who talked of "gas," with which he allowed people to believe he had filled his machines. He said nothing about air rarefied by heat, doubtless wishing to keep the secret to himself—to which he had a perfect right. Although journals did not exist at that date, the news of the experiment rapidly spread throughout all France, and everyone wanted to repeat it. The successful invasion of the regions of air now only required confirmation and improvement—which had not long to be waited for.

A young Parisian scientist named Charles—who has hardly had sufficient justice done to his merits in the annals of ballooning—could not learn what sort of "gas" the Brothers Montgolfier had employed; but he knew that Priestly had discovered, a few years previously, inflammable air or hydrogen, which is five and a half times lighter than atmospheric air. Whether he supposed that this was the Montgolfiers' gas, or whether he was inspired by a happy idea of his own, he determined also to make a balloon, and to fill it with hydrogen gas.

Subsequently, Charles greatly improved his machine. He invented the valve, the ballast, the outer containing-net, the car,

rendered the envelope impermeable, contrived a speedier mode of filling his balloon, and, in short, perfected the art of aerostation to a degree which has hardly been surpassed.

After surmounting many difficulties, Charles's hydrogen balloon rose from the Champ de Mars at five in the afternoon of the 26th of August, 1785, in the midst of an immense crowd, the firing of cannon, and a pelting rain. It mounted rapidly, entered a cloud—which was greeted with loud applause—soon emerged, soaring higher and receding farther, until it was lost to sight.

The conclusion of its airy journey, at Gonesse, is not the least curious part of its history. The natives who beheld its shapeless mass lying outstretched on the ground, half distended, swaying to and fro in the wind, took it for the skin of some monstrous animal. It was exorcised by the parish priest, fastened to a horse's tail, and dragged away. One of the boldest of the lookers-on fired his gun at it twice. From the wound there issued something like a sigh, followed by a most diabolical smell. The balloon was then torn, cut up, mutilated. When people came from Paris to fetch it, they found nothing but its shapeless fragments.

This substitution of hydrogen gas for heated air may be called the second important step in ballooning. The disastrous combination of a hydrogen balloon enclosed in a montgolfière—or balloon filled with air that was kept in a rarefied state by burning damp straw and moistened wool—was self-evidently too dangerous to be continued after its tragical results had been once experienced. The balloon proved its great superiority, both in power, endurance, and security, to the original montgolfière.

The third step was to make the balloon lift living creatures from the surface of the earth, and carry them to a distance through the air, as the roc carried Sindbad to the Valley of Diamonds. This feat, as may be easily imagined, was a speedy result of Charles's success. The King, Louis the Sixteenth, sympathised with his subjects in the desire to witness a balloon ascent. To gratify his wish, an immense montgolfière, sixty feet high, adorned with mythological emblems and the royal monogram, was prepared in the courtyard of Versailles. In spite of its vast dimensions, it rapidly filled, rose to the height of nearly two thousand feet, and fell, eight minutes

afterwards, at Vaucresson. Attached to it, in a cage, were a duck, a cock, and a sheep, which it safely deposited in a glade of the forest. The sheep, especially, appeared unconscious of its journey, and insensible to the honour of having been the first wingless terrestrial animal to take so lofty a trip in the air.

But now a new aeronaut, destined to be tragically famous—if air-navigator he can in strictness be called—appears on the scene. Etienne Montgolfier had taken, for assistant, a young man named Pilâtre de Rozier, born at Nancy, who had been Professor of Physics at Rheims. His scientific knowledge was considerable, to which were added great personal agility, manual dexterity, and no common share of hardihood. After repeated public essays in a captive balloon—the public applause on every occasion inciting him to further adventure—a voyage through the air in a free balloon was determined on. The travellers who resolved to make this first attempt were Pilâtre de Rozier and the Marquis d'Arlandes, infantry major, who, to quiet the King's apprehensions, had offered to accompany Pilâtre. Louis wanted to replace the aeronauts by two condemned criminals, who should be pardoned in case they came down safe; but Pilâtre refused to yield either the honour of the danger or the glory of success.

All went well. They attained an elevation of three thousand feet, traversed the whole of Paris, and descended at the mill of Croulebarbe. The montgolfière had proved its ability to transport them; but, if it was speedily heated, it cooled as speedily. It could only be maintained at the required elevation by keeping up the fire at a great expenditure of fuel. Charles, determined to outdo Pilâtre, and prove the superiority of his hydrogen balloon, made an ascent from the Tuileries garden, accompanied by Robert, amidst the same concourse of spectators and the same firing of guns. In two hours the balloon had reached Nesles, nine leagues from Paris. The Duc de Chartres followed them across country on horseback. Just as he arrived, Robert got out of the car, but Charles remained. The balloon, partially relieved of its load, again ascended, and chanced to meet two contrary currents, the first of which carried it away, and the second brought it back to the starting-point.

Almost from the first, if not from the very first, the possibility of steering balloons in a given direction was believed

in. If it could not be effected immediately, it would be effected sooner or later. The first aeronauts were willing to believe it themselves, and had an interest in allowing others to believe it. The practical solution of the problem is still a desideratum. For, although a balloon has been steered from Meudon to Paris and back, by Captains Renard and Krebs, the feat was performed under circumstances so favourable, and by means so limited, as to deprive it of the hope of general application—at least, at present.

Charles thought the direction of balloons possible, though he admitted the difficulties of its realisation. Everybody, especially the ignorant, tried to guide balloons by the application of external machinery. If sails and a rudder direct the course of a ship, if rowers by means of oars impel a boat whithersoever they wish, why should not sails, or oars, or rudder be made to alter the track of a balloon?

But here it is forgotten that the conditions of support are not the same. A ship floats on the surface of one liquid, water, which supports it; the motive force which enables it to modify its direction is given by air, in the shape of wind, which does not support it at all, but drives it forward. In the absence of wind to cause it to move, the ship drifts helplessly whithersoever the current of water runs, exactly as the balloon drifts in the current of air. If there is neither wind nor current, the ship, like the balloon after it has attained the elevation answering to its specific gravity, remains still and stationary. Note also that these two means of support and of motion—namely, the water, and the air or wind—are separated by a plane of superficial limit which keeps them perfectly distinct and independent of each other, in action, as well as in elementary nature. With a balloon, on the contrary, the gas, atmospheric air, which supports it above the earth's surface, is the same which carries it or drives it away in a horizontal direction.

The boat, too, like the ship, floats on that limiting surface which has water beneath it, and air above. The impulsive force is given by rowers whose oars derive their motive power from the resistance given by the water beneath to the lateral pressure on it by the rowers, who are above its surface. A submarine boat below the surface—supposing its rowers capable of acting under water—could only be rowed by a most skilful feathering of most powerful

oars. Such oars, with sufficient force to work them, have not yet been annexed to a balloon. Otherwise, the conditions of a balloon are similar to those of a submarine boat sufficiently light to remain suspended in mid-water.

For a balloon does not float on the surface, but swims in the midst of an ocean of air, exactly as a fish swims in the midst of the waters of the sea. The difference of the specific gravity of the sea-water and the fish is not great; a slight effort—aided by the air-bladder, when present—suffices to support the fish at the desired elevation above the bottom of the sea; and the immense muscular force of the fish, relative to its bulk, and its weight in the water, enables it to steer its course at will.

When we can endow a balloon with a motive power as great, compared with its total weight and its bulk, as that possessed by a fish, we shall have achieved the direction of balloons—but in a measure only. For the aerial currents with which such a balloon would have to contend—tornadoes, cyclones, hurricanes—greatly exceed in velocity any known ocean or river currents against which fish are able to make their way.

The hope of this most desirable consummation has given rise to curious speculations. In 1855, Henri Giffard planned a long balloon, pointed at both ends, kept rigid by a dorsal axis or backbone, carrying a screw-propeller, a rudder, a high pressure steam-engine, with a condenser to reproduce the water expended. The scheme was to result in a monster "aeronef" capable of carrying one hundred persons with sufficient provisions, and of flying round the world in forty-one days, the journey costing only ninety-five francs, or less than four pounds, per head. But between the cup and the lip we know what often happens.

An experiment on a small scale promised well; the ascent was all right, but the descent, contrary to Virgil's dictum, was not easy—nay, was even dangerous. The whole construction pitched down on one end. The balloon, escaping from its enclosing net, started off for the upper regions. Notwithstanding which trifling check to his enterprise, Giffard did not give up hopes of success on a future attempt. But he was short of three things most useful to inventors—patience, perseverance, and money. So he took to the management of captive balloons.

For these and several other particulars I

am indebted to a capital article, *Les Ballons*, by M. J. Jamin, in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.

The next step in ballooning was to cross the sea, for which there existed political as well as scientific motives. It was desirable to be able to take a flight through the air, out of France into England, without fear of being arrested on the way. To accomplish this, a rivalry arose between competing aeronauts. Naturally, Pilâtre de Rozier expected to secure precedence in this then important matter. His tragical end has been related in an early volume of the original Household Words. He was forestalled in his project of crossing the Channel, though in a direction opposite to that desired, by his countryman, Blanchard, who started from Dover on the 7th of January, 1785, accompanied by Dr. Jefferies, an Englishman, who had accepted the extraordinary condition to throw himself into the sea if the balloon required easing. Though the voyage became risky towards its close, Jefferies escaped having to swim to shore. The wind was favourable, and landed them safely—that is, with only a moderate allowance of bruises—in the Forest of Guines, about nine miles south of Calais. Of course they were received at Calais with all the honours—carriage and six, city gates thrown wide open, bells ringing, flags flying, dinner at the Hôtel de Ville, and freedom of the town in a gold box, as befitted the brave fellows who, for the first time, had cleared the Strait through what are called "the realms of air."

It is now intended to celebrate, at Guines, at Whitsuntide, on the 24th and 25th of May, the centenary of Blanchard's crossing the Channel. As January is hardly the month for garden-parties, even under the shelter of a wood, the date has been transferred to that of the erection of the column which marks the spot where the balloon finally fell on the tree-tops of the Forest of Guines. The column, at present richly decorated with *Nomina Stultorum*, who have thus foolishly left their card on the departed aeronauts, is to be renovated, whitewashed, and probably scraped a little. The car of the balloon, possessed by the Calais Museum, ought, if possible, to be exhibited beside the column, in order that the public may see in what a tiny and fragile walnut-shell two adventurous heroes risked their lives.

From this spot a balloon ascent is to be performed by M. F. L'Hoste, who was the

first to pay us the return balloon-visit by crossing the Channel from France to England. On this occasion, too, he proposes to come to England, if—for, in ballooning especially, man may propose, but he cannot dispose. The last balloon visit to us from the Continent, quite unintentional and involuntary, was thus related in the Times of March 17th:

"Yesterday morning, some labourers at work in a field near Bromley were considerably astonished to see a large balloon bounding across some fields a short distance from them. It was at length brought to a standstill by the grappling-iron getting entangled in a tree. The men proceeded to the assistance of the aeronauts, who proved to be M. Ferdinand Dubois, of the Société Aeronautique of Paris, and a Belgian gentleman named Farenza. They had undergone a perilous balloon adventure, having crossed the Channel much against their will, and quite contrary to their original intentions. The ascent was made on Saturday, a few miles from Antwerp, the aeronauts intending, if possible, to descend somewhere near Brussels. All went well until, M. Dubois throwing out ballast, they ascended higher. Coming into contact with a fresh current of air, they were carried in a contrary direction, and at nightfall were carried rapidly out to sea. The aeronauts, naturally much alarmed, endeavoured to attract the attention of some vessels they saw beneath them. Failing in this, M. Dubois deemed it prudent to throw out more ballast, so as to secure as high an ascent as was deemed advisable under the circumstances. All the provisions they were provided with were some sandwiches, biscuits, two flasks of brandy, and some water. These they utilised to the best advantage, and when morning dawned they found themselves far away out at sea. For the greater part of Sunday they were over the sea, but as dusk set in they were delighted to find themselves being carried towards land. Yesterday morning they found themselves passing rapidly over a town, which they believed to be Folkestone, and they descended, as has been stated, near Bromley."

The Guines fête has some special attractions which particularly recommend it to holiday-makers from populous cities. Not to mention the Saturday's "conférence" or lecture on Blanchard's voyage and his imitators, by M. Wilfrid de Fonvielle, which will greatly interest those hearers who can

follow spoken French—far less easy than to read currently written or printed French—there are other things to tempt the visitor.

Any and every fête can offer illuminations, pilot balloons, bands of music, fireworks, and so on; but not every fête can offer the pure air, the bright, limpid waters of Guines, the fresh forest, carpeted with anemones, cowslips, and periwinkles, where nightingales are singing all day as well as all night, and jays sound their note of alarm when the curious intruder leaves the open grassy glade to penetrate the mysteries of the verdant thicket. For rare and beautiful terrestrial orchids are to be found there by those who care to search for them in season; the orchis, for instance, whose flower simulates a bee; another, pure white, deliciously vanilla-scented, besides not a few species of minor mark. From the border of this forest, the blue sea, which Blanchard and Jefferies crossed, is visible along the distant horizon. The freshness of its breezes is felt on the cheek, and inhaled with delight into the greedy lungs.

There will be a great gathering of peasantry from the interior, many of whom regard a balloon with wonderment scarcely less than that of those who beheld Pilâtre de Rozier's initial launch upwards. Duruof, the aeronaut, who with his wife nearly lost their lives in the North Sea after an ascent from Calais, subsequently came to Guines and made an ascent from the market-place, where I happened to be one of the spectators. As soon as the balloon was fairly let loose, and while Duruof was coolly scattering handbills over the heads of the gaping crowd, a peasant at my elbow exclaimed: "Oh, mon Dieu! They have let him go! What would his wife say if she saw it? Wouldn't she kick up a row at their playing him such a trick as that?"

"Well," I said, "that's his wife up there, looking out of the first-floor window. She doesn't seem to be much put out. She knows that if she were to scold ever so loud, he would very soon be out of hearing."

My neighbour gave a sigh of relief, as if secretly wishing that he, too, could be out of hearing when domestic squalls and storms arise. Duruof, for this once, cut his journey short, regaining terra-firma in time to return and sup with his friends and his expectant wife, who, I fancy, did not scold him at all.

THE SECRET OF THE BROOK.

THE silver brook is dancing light
 All in the golden sunshine bright;
 Across the stones with moss bedight,
 Its curling eddies whirl and fight,
 In many a lovely nook;
 It murmurs with melodious flow
 Among the lilies white as snow,
 As onward it doth singing go
 Toward the mighty sea below;
 Thus ripples on the brook.

Come to me, Love! The day is fair,
 And blossom-scented is the air,
 The flowers their choicest colours wear,
 'Tis beauty here, and beauty there,

Far as the eye can see;
 Together let us joyous sing,
 Whilst sunny summer-time doth bring
 Fresh life and joy to everything,
 For Time, alas! is on the wing;
 Come, come, my Love, to me!

There's tender music in the sound
 Of plashing waters all around,
 As o'er the pebbles light doth bound—
 So light it scarce doth touch the ground—
 The ever-rippling brook.

Oh, Love! each mellow, dulcet tone
 Speaks to our souls, as here we own
 We for each other live alone;
 The secret of our hearts is shown,
 And written in Life's Book.

CHRONICLES OF ENGLISH
COUNTIES.

WILTSHIRE.

WILTSHIRE is no doubt the shire of the Wilsaetan, the settlers in the wild—although it was sometimes called Wil-tuncsir from its once chief settlement of Wilton. And Wilton takes its name from the little river Wiley that flows thereby. But anyhow, river, town, and county are all suggestive of the wilderness, and this wilderness is still represented by Salisbury Plain, which retains a good deal of its early character; lonely and desolate, with its crown of ancient mystery in far-famed Stonehenge. And far and near the hills are scored with traces of prehistoric man—with camps, and circles, and entrenchments—while mounds and barrows without number rise on every side, the burial-places of men who fought with weapons of flint or of bronze.

Time out of mind the origin and purpose of Stonehenge have been fiercely contested among antiquarians. The traditions of the Welsh are vague upon the matter, and ascribe the placing of the stones in their present position to the spells of their great bard and enchanter, Merlin. But it seems that from an early date one of the great British temples or perpetual choirs was established in the neighbour-

hood of Stonehenge, and that it became one of the centres of British monasticism, taking its name from Emrys or Ambrose, its founder. And this monastery seems to have been respected by the Saxon settlers on the Wild, who transferred the name of Ambrose to their own settlement of Amesbury—now a village, and once the seat of the Duke of Queensberry, not far from Stonehenge.

In Wiltshire, too, we have an instance of a British city that became a populous English town—a town with its strong castle, its minster, its walls, with a colony of stout burghers clustered within, coming into the full light of history, and yet eventually abandoned, and left to the bats and owls. Old Sarum attained something like fame half a century or more ago as a typical specimen of a rotten borough. Certain men met on a grassy mound, where there was no trace of human habitation, and elected two representatives at the bidding of a neighbouring magnate. And yet the deserted mound was once the centre of busy civic life. In Roman days Old Sarum had been a district metropolis, the centre of a network of great roads, stretching in every direction. A hundred years had elapsed from the first hostile landing of the Saxons in Britain before Serebury—the sere or dry town, as dry as the sere and yellow leaf; so named from its situation at a distance from watercourse or river—fell into the hands of the conquerors. Even then the city was spared, and remained an important place, once, at least, to witness the gathering of a Saxon Witan. The numerous Roman roads that centred here made the place a convenient centre for such assemblages. At a later date, the Conqueror convened a general council of his nobles, to parcel out the lands of England, and settle that strict feudal compact which has left its traces to the present time.

In Saxon times, there had been no bishopric at Serebury. The primitive hierarchy of the native blood had sought solitude and retirement, shaded nooks by stream and mead, such as Sherbourne or Dorchester. But the worldly, civilised Norman Churchmen were not long in removing to more populous centres. Thus, soon after the Conquest, Serebury became a bishop's seat, and a cathedral was built forthwith—no doubt on the site of earlier Saxon and British churches. A strange city this must have been, closely shut in by its enormous ramparts, where the

gloomy Norman donjon, and the equally gloomy towers of the massive cathedral, excluded the sunshine from the narrow crowded streets, where canons, students, pedlars, and rough men-at-arms jostled each other in promiscuous confusion. From the ramparts, indeed, a pleasant sight met the eye; the fertile valley of the Avon, where the river, breaking through the ramparts of the hills, pursues its winding way towards the New Forest; with here and there a village on its banks marked by the brighter green of the surrounding fields, and the church tower rising darkly from among the sheltering trees. The sheltered valley below seemed a very land of promise to the chilly and sensitive Churchmen. The canons shivered in their surplices as the wind whistled through the sombre arcades of their dim cathedral. Sometimes, howling through the openings of the lantern tower, the storm would overpower the voices of the choristers, as if the old heathen gods, who had been worshipped there long ago, resented the performance of these elaborate Christian rites. And then the water-supply was scanty.

The art of well-sinking must have been practised in England long before historic times, else how account for those ancient camps and fortresses on the hill-tops, where springs were non-existent, and where deep wells must have been the only means of supplying the garrisons? However this may be, there were deep and excellent wells in the city of Old Sarum; but these, of military necessity, were under the control of the castellan, who exacted payment for the supply of water to canons and townspeople; the first instance, perhaps, of a water-rate in our annals.

Moved by these considerations, the Bishop resolved to transfer both church and clergy to the banks of the river in the fertile vale below, and with the consent of King and Pope, the foundations of the new church of Salisbury were laid, in the early years of the thirteenth century, with much pomp and ceremony, at a spot near the meeting of the Avon and two of its tributary streams. Pandulph, the Pope's legate, is said to have laid the first stone in honour of Pope Honorius; the second stone was for the King, and the third for the Archbishop. The great Earl of the county, William Longespee, laid the next stone, and after him his Countess wielded the trowel, and other great nobles flocked to join in the pious work, and dedicated a part of their revenues for seven years to

come towards the expenses of the building. In a few years the church had so far advanced to completion that a portion of it was consecrated for public service, and the great Earl, who had helped to lay its foundations, was the first to be buried within its precincts.

A rising city thrived and prospered about the new cathedral, and the citizens of Old Sarum removed their dwellings to the new site. The building of a bridge over the Avon in 1244, and the diversion of the highway, gave the coup de grâce to Old Sarum, whose buildings fell to decay, so that by the middle of the fifteenth century the whole site had become a desolate solitude. In the seventeenth century, Samuel Pepys, not a romantic or imaginative traveller, riding over the heath, guided by the sight of Salisbury steeple, records: "I saw a great fortification, and there light, and to it, and in it, and find it prodigious, so as to fright me to be in it all alone at that time of night."

The cathedral of Salisbury, built from the foundations during the best period of Gothic architecture, is notable for its grace and finish, although, perhaps, it lacks something of the picturesqueness of the irregular outlines of many mingled styles.

Famous in history, but of small account at the present time, is Clarendon, an ancient seat of the English kings, and probably of British and Saxon kings before them, with extensive foundations, covering sixty or seventy acres, but with only a rude fragment in an upstanding state. Here was held the great council which settled the affairs of the Church in the Constitutions of Clarendon, and at which Becket and King Henry came to loggerheads. We may call to mind, too, some notable Earls of Clarendon, whose title was taken from this deserted palace.

Notable, too, in political history is the adjoining village of Farley, whence sprang the Fox family, whose founder, Sir Stephen Fox, of obscure, if respectable parentage, followed the fortunes of Charles the Second in his exile, and was so successful in financing the household of the impecunious prince that he was rewarded at the Restoration with the more lucrative office of Paymaster-General of the Forces. The better-known Charles James Fox, the great Parliamentary leader, seems so essentially a modern figure that it is rather startling to find him the grandson of one who had been a servant of King Charles the Second, a few generations thus covering such a

large space of time and such vast social changes. Sir Stephen largely benefited his native village, building church and almshouses, and leaving many memorials of his generosity.

Farther to the south, on the banks of Avon, lies Downton, famed in legendary lore as the dwelling-place of Bogo, Beirs, or Bevis. In evidence of which is one of the most remarkable of existing pre-Norman monuments, known as the Moot, a series of immense earthworks, with a conical mound in the centre, the latter probably used by the Saxons for local and national assemblies, although tradition—not to be despised in this connection—ascribes a still more ancient origin to the place, even to the days of mighty Arthur and his table round. Another entrenchment of unknown origin and great antiquity is known as Grim's Ditch, and marks the boundary of some forgotten kingdom, while farther to the west the Arthurian tradition is continued in Garven's Barrow, near Broad Chalk:

That Garvayn with his old courtiſye,
who still abides in Fairyland, although
now and then he may be permitted to
revisit the glimpses of the moon over his
old hunting-grounds, still often resounding
to the music of horn and hounds.

Many are the woods and chases in this southern part of Wilts—a part cut off from the rest of the country by the broad wilderness of Salisbury Plain. And traces of the old forest laws have come down to modern times. A great hunting-ground was Cranbourn Chase, that at one time seems to have joined the New Forest on the one side, while it stretched almost to Salisbury city on the other. Thus, till recently, in the fence month—for fifteen days before Midsummer Day, and for as long after—every waggon and packhorse passing over Harnham Bridge, close by Salisbury, was liable to pay toll for the benefit of the forester, on account of the disturbance to the deer while dropping their fawns. At this period a pair of horns were fixed over the bridge as a warning to travellers to keep themselves and their dogs in order in passing along the highway.

Remains of the ancient forest exist in the numerous parks and woods in this part of the country. There is Wardour, with its ancient ruin and classic mansion, the seat of Lord Arundel, which has given its name to Wardour Street, Soho; and a

little to the north lies Fonthill Abbey, of more recent fame as the seat of Alderman Beckford and his son, the eccentric author of *Vathek*. The glories of Fonthill, built by James Wyatt in his best style of debased Gothic, with a tower near three hundred feet high, soon came to an end. The tower fell down in 1825 with a crash that destroyed the best part of the edifice, and there is now little to be seen of this ruin of modern times.

Near the south-west angle of the county, where Somerset, Dorset, and Wilts meet, lies Mere, with its handsome church; and still farther west, in a nook that is almost surrounded by Somersetshire, is Stourton, with Stourhead close by, with its singular springs—six of them in all, three in Somersetshire and three in Wilts—which form the source of the river Stour; a river that follows a winding independent course right across the county of Dorset, till it falls into the Christchurch Estuary close to Avonmouth. And this Stourhead, with its park and mansion, is one of the most ancient seats in the kingdom, a Saxon fortress *lang syne*; but in modern times the seat of the Hoares, whose name is equally familiar in Fleet Street as in Wilts.

Of this family was Sir Richard Colt Hoare, renowned for his *Monumental Histories of Ancient and Modern Wiltshire*,—monumental truly in size and weight—the last in six huge volumes, the thinnest of which is a good load for a topographical student; but a monument also of a rational employment of cultured leisure and unstinted wealth. Of his own prosperous and unchequered career the historian gives a short sketch. "Suffice it to say that in my youth I was initiated in the business of our family bank, till my grandfather removed me from it and gave up to me, during his own lifetime, all his landed property." But during all his long life, the chief delight of this worthy baronet was in the history and traditions of his own county.

Visitors to Salisbury Cathedral will notice the fine effigy of Sir Richard Hoare among the monuments of the worthies of the county. There may also be noticed a plain altar tomb, in memory not of a worthy indeed, but of one of the former lords of Stourton, to which attaches a strange and sinister interest. Six openings in the tomb represent the six springs of Stour, which the lords of Stourton bore in their coat-of-arms. Till within the present century there was suspended over

the tomb a wire noose, which significantly conveyed to the passer-by the fact that he who rested below had been hanged. The story of Lord Stourton's fate, apart from its tragic interest, conveys such a curious picture of the manners of the times, and of the district which formed the scene of its occurrence, that it may be well to tell here an oft-told tale that may now have become new again from its very antiquity.

We must go back to the reign of Edward the Sixth, when every parish, and almost every household, was divided against itself by unhappy religious dissensions. Charles, Lord Stourton, was the son of one of Henry the Eighth's captains, who had lost his life at the siege of "Bullen," and his mother had been one of those proud and aspiring Dudleys into whose generous veins some malignant fairy seems to have squeezed a drop of black and murderous blood. His high connections brought Lord Stourton into active political life; he voted frequently in the royal council, generally in a sense opposite to the Reformation, and he was one of those who cast to his death the ill-fated Seymour, Duke of Somerset. The example of his noble relations, who unhesitatingly did to death any who came in their way, although preferably by due form of law, encouraged, no doubt, in Lord Stourton a certain unscrupulous, arbitrary way of action, that was likely to prove inconvenient in private life. And in his private life he had many things to try him. Old Evergreen, his father, had married again, late in life—the Lady Elizabeth having been conveyed to the tomb—a young wife, doubtless, one Mistress Ryce, according to the record—probably a stirring, black-eyed Welsh Dame Rhys. And the old man had left to Madame Rhys the greater part of his disposable goods and chattels, while, backed up by the steward of the estate, one Hartgill, she seems even to have taken possession of the family mansion, and held it against Lord Stourton *vi et armis*.

Here, however, Lord Stourton had the law on his side, and he succeeded in turning out Madame Rhys, who took refuge in the house of Hartgill, the steward. Now, this Hartgill had been once a favourite retainer of Lord Charles. He had killed a man in a broil, it is said, and was therefore glad of such a powerful protector. On his part Lord Charles was glad to enlist a man with such strong recommendations in his favour, and treated him

well, and even went to the expense of ten groats in masses, to clear Master Hartgill of the sin of homicide. Thus it was the terrible ingratitude of the man that angered Lord Stourton to madness, when he who had risen under his patronage to be steward, and whom he had put as a sort of locum tenens into the manor of Kilmington—which had once belonged to the Church, and which he could not conscientiously hold himself—should turn round and defy him. However, his lordship determined to be reasonable and conciliatory, and, going to Hartgill's house with only a dozen or so of stout fellows at his heels, he put it to his old retainer calmly: Will you and Dame Rhys enter into a bond, under such and such tremendous penalties, that she shall never marry again, or take her ill-got belongings into the house of a stranger? Hartgill would have nothing to say to this, and my lord took his refusal in high dudgeon.

On Whit Sunday, in the morning, when service was going on, no doubt according to the new prayer-book—for the Hartgills were staunch for the Reformation—Lord Charles came to Kilmington Church with a great many men armed with bows and guns; when John Hartgill, the steward's son, a tall, lusty young gentleman, hearing the clash of arms outside, drew his sword, and cut his way through the host in the churchyard to his father's house. Divers shots were made at him, but he escaped them all, and, arming himself with a long-bow, and causing a woman-servant to follow him with a cross-bow and gun, the brave youth drove Lord Charles and the bulk of his men out of the churchyard. But a portion of the assailants had entered the church in search of the father, who, being old and scant of breath, thought no shame to take refuge in the church-tower with his wife and three or four serving-men, where they barricaded themselves against their assailants. John, seeing how matters stood, hailed his father in the tower, and asked him what he should do now. "Ride away to Court and tell the council how I am used," cried the old man. And John, having hastily provisioned the tower with such victuals as could be hauled up by ropes, took horse and rode off for London, or Windsor, or where the Court might be, and laid complaint before the council. The council acted with promptitude, and sent the sheriff of Somerset to the scene with all haste.

The sheriff arrived at Kilmington on the

Wednesday and released old Hartgill from the church-tower, where he had been besieged all this time. Lord Stourton did not venture to try conclusions with the King's officer, and accompanied the sheriff to London, where he was admitted to the Fleet; but there he tarried not long. His friends in the council were too powerful for the Hartgills, and when my lord was released he hastened home to take his revenge.

And thus, during all King Edward's reign, Lord Stourton continued his malice against the Hartgills, seizing corn and cattle whenever he could lay hands upon them, so that the family dared stay no longer in the neighbourhood, and took refuge elsewhere.

When King Edward was dead, however, the Hartgills, in person, made humble suit to Queen Mary for justice, when she was lying at Basing End, in Hampshire. Lord Stourton, as a zealous Catholic, was in personal favour with the Queen, notwithstanding his connection with the Dudleys, while the Hartgills, being of the Puritan persuasion, could hardly expect much favour. But, with all her faults, Mary had a royal sense of justice, and she called on Lord Stourton to make amends. And so my lord promised that if the Hartgills would come home and desire his good-will—a relic of the almost-forgotten homage due to the lord of the fee—he would take them under his protection and restore all their goods and chattels. Upon this the Hartgills rode homewards, taking a witness to their submission, but were set upon on the way by Lord Stourton's men, who left John Hartgill for dead by the roadside, while the father and his friend escaped unhurt.

John, however, recovered from his wounds, and haled Lord Stourton before the Star Chamber, which imposed a fine for the benefit of the Hartgills, and committed my lord once more to the Fleet. Lord Stourton, however, soon got his liberty on bail, and rode away to spend his Christmas at Stourton. Then he sent word to the Hartgills that he was ready to pay them the Star Chamber money, and desired to come to an end of all disputes, if they would appoint a meeting. The Hartgills, still doubting, as was natural enough, his lordship's disposition, appointed the Monday after Twelfth Day, in Kilmington Church porch—a very usual place to receive and pay legal obligations. And Lord Stourton was punctual to his tryst, but

came with fifteen or sixteen servants of his own, and a great company of knights, justices, and other gentlemen, in all about sixty in number.

It says something for the state of manners in the west, that the sight of all these knights and justices, so far from reassuring the Hartgills, filled them with dismay. With just forebodings, they could hardly be prevailed upon to approach, but came forth at last upon the word of the knights and justices that no harm should befall them. My lord had taken his station at the door of the church-house—the usual meeting-place of the village council, where they feasted afterwards—as vestrymen have done in later times.

My lord had spread his baits; a bag of money and sundry papers appeared on the table before him. They should have their money, every penny of it, as the Hartgills approached; but, first, my lord would know them to be true men. These words were the signal agreed upon between Lord Stourton and his men, who closed in upon the unfortunate Hartgills. "I attach you of felony," roared his lordship; and this charge was held to absolve the knights and justices from their pledged word. The Hartgills were bound hand and foot, and thus left prisoners at the parsonage; while John's wife, who had come to her husband's help, was brutally cut down by Lord Stourton. Some form of law was preserved in all this lawlessness; for the Hartgills were dragged to a house near Stourton, and there examined by two justices of the peace—friends of my lord—who made out a mittimus to send them to gaol. But Lord Stourton, knowing how poor an account he could make of all this before the council, now gave rein to his murderous passion. At night he sent four of his servants to bring the Hartgills before him, bidding them significantly knock the captives on the head if they were troublesome.

And then the old man and his son were dragged forth and knocked on the head with clubs, while my lord stood at the door of his gallery, which was scarce a quoit's cast from the place of execution. The bodies of the victims were dragged to his lordship's feet, when, as they stirred and groaned, he bade the others cut their throats. And when this was done, one at least of the poor, brutal hinds who had too faithfully done their master's bidding, awoke to the horror of the deed.

"Ah, my lord, this is a pitiful sight!"

cried the repentant murderer. "Had I thought that I now think before the thing was done, your whole land could not have won me to such a deed."

But Lord Stourton bade the men take heart, for it was no more than killing two sheep.

At the foot of the gallery-stairs was a pit or dungeon, belonging to the old castle, and into this the bodies were thrown; while two of the men were let down with ropes into the dreadful oubliette and buried the bodies deep beneath stones and rubbish.

But justice was at last aroused, and those who had been the wicked lord's accomplices now hastened to denounce him. And presently we find Lord Stourton arraigned at Westminster Hall, before the judges and divers of the council. Sullenly he held his tongue, and mutely refused to plead, till the Chief Justice sternly declared that if he would not answer, he should be pressed to death. He made no further defence, and, cast by his own words, was condemned to die. And from the Tower the sheriff of his county took him, and they rode by leisurely stages towards Salisbury, and there, in the early morning, Lord Stourton was hung—with a silken rope, it is said—with one of his men by his side. The other three ruffians were hanged on the scene of their crime. And thus ended a tragedy that made a great impression on the men of the west, although it is strange to find that the sympathy of the county gentry was rather with "this unfortunate nobleman," as he is euphemistically called by the historian of Wilts, although at best but a cowardly ruffian, than with the victims of his crime.

A narrow belt of fertile land connects the two sections of Wiltshire, otherwise so completely severed by the wild of Salisbury Plain, with Heytesbury (locally known as Holdsbury), Warminster, and Westbury, as so many stages in the highway that leads to the local capital of Trowbridge—a district, this, where the cloth trade still survives, and makes head against the competition of Yorkshire and the Continent, and which has preserved for West of England cloths the reputation they enjoy. Then we come to Bradford, which is the Bradford over the river Avon—the Bristol Avon, that is—while, a little higher up the river, we come to Melksham, an ancient town that, after many ups and downs, has attained to some prosperity as an agricultural centre. The mineral waters which

abound in the neighbourhood suggested the attempt to establish a rival settlement to that of Bath; but fashion refused to transfer its favours to the new spa, and the baths and pump-room have been turned to other uses.

A little to the north of Melksham runs a well-defined Roman road connecting Bath and Marlborough, with the remains of an intermediate station at Heddington, where many Roman relics have been discovered. Not far distant is Bowood, the seat of the Pettys, a family which sprang from the great clothing industry, the first of whom to attain celebrity being Sir William, Physician-General to the Army in the time of the Commonwealth, and one of the early members of the College of Physicians and the Royal Society. Bowood itself formed part of the great forest called Pewsham, and was disafforested in the days of the great Oliver. The deer with which the wood was stocked had to be conveyed to Spy Park, through Locks-hill Heath, across which it is said that the clothiers of the neighbourhood constructed a way skirted with broadcloth, along which the herd were safely driven.

Laycock Abbey is close by—an interesting mansion, embodying the remains of the old nunnery, with its cloisters, offices, and refectory, while the bell that softly sounds the hours is the matin-bell that called the nuns to prayer. The nunnery was founded by Ela, the widow of William Longespee, a dame devout and fair, whom the King's justicier, Hugh de Burgh, it is said, attempted to corrupt during her husband's lifetime; but, failing in his purpose, he poisoned Earl William, who certainly died with suspicious suddenness after partaking of a feast of reconciliation with the enemy of his domestic peace. The Earl, it may be remembered, was the son of Henry the Second and Fair Rosamond, to whom tradition has ascribed a like tragic ending. Dame Ela, however, remained faithful to her husband's memory, and in the end took the veil in her own convent, of which she became Lady Abbess.

On the extreme border of the county hereabouts is the pretty valley of Box, with Boxbrook flowing through it, and the famous tunnel of the Great Western Railway burrowing beneath. Near the entrance of the tunnel is Corsham, with its ancient hospital, of which Hasted, the Kentish topographer, was once the master. The parish church, too, is ancient and fine, and Corsham Court, the seat of the Methuen

family, is a well-known show-place, with a good collection of pictures.

To the westward, the Fosseway forms, for a couple of miles, the division between Wilts and Gloucester, and then lies in Wiltshire altogether till near Malmesbury, where it again forms the boundary-line for a space. At Malmesbury, the famous abbey is represented by portions of its once magnificent church, which now form the parish church. "Where the choir was is now grass-grown, where anciently were buried kings and great men; King Athelstan's grave now an asparagus-bed," writes John Aubrey, the antiquary; and this is a reminder that we are now in Aubrey's county, although he is better known as the author of a perambulation of Surrey.

Aubrey was born at Easton Piercy, not far from here, in 1629, and some of his gossiping notes about his own neighbourhood are interesting. Draycot House was not far off, which Aubrey remembered as the seat of Sir Walter Long, a friend of Sir Walter Raleigh's, "and was the first who brought tobacco into use in Wilts. In those days the gentry had silver pipes. The ordinary sort made use of a walnut-shell and a strawe"—a hint here for modern pipe-makers. "Within these thirty-five years it was scandalous for a divine to take tobacco." In those days tobacco was worth its weight in silver, and, says Aubrey, "I have heard some of our old yeomen neighbours say that when they went to Malmesbury or Chippenham, they culled their biggest shillings to lay in the scale against tobacco."

And Aubrey dwells with regret on the former state of the county before it was cut up by enclosures. "This county was then a lovely compain. In my remembrance much hath been enclosed, and every year more and more. There was then a world of labouring people maintayned by the plough. There were no rates for the poore even in my grandfather's daies, for the church ale at Witsuntide did their business."

Quaint, too, is the story of how Newton parish got its common. "King Athelstan having obtained a victory over the Danes by the assistance of the inhabitants of this place, riding to recreate himself, found a woman bayting of her cove upon the way called the Fosse, which is a famous Roman way that goes from Cornwall to Scotland. This woman sat on a stoole, with the cove fastened by a rope to the legge of the stoole. The manner of it occasioned the King to ask why she did so.

She answered the King that they had no common belonging to the town. The Queen being then in his company, by their consent it was granted that the town should have so much ground as the woman would ride round upon a bare-ridged horse." The good woman undertook the task, and carried it safely through, since which time Newton has had its common, and up to the end of the seventeenth century, and perhaps later, commemorated the gift yearly by a kind of feast, one of the most striking features of which was "a mayd of the town, with a ghirland round her neck," who is to be kissed three times by a bachelor of some other parish, who, in his turn, "wears the ghirland, and is kissed by the mayd." Then there was a prayer, and, in the end, a big supper.

The wild country begins again as we approach Marlborough with her stretching downs, and, on the way, a relic of prehistoric times in a wonderful stone circle at Avebury; not so imposing as Stonehenge, as meadows, cottages, and enclosures now occupy the site, but more extensive, and betokening some high ceremonial purpose—whether of Druidic rite or some still more ancient cultus, it is hard to say. But enough has been written on the subject to fill many portly volumes, and that without arriving at any thoroughly satisfactory conclusion.

LADY LOVELACE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "JUDITH WYNNE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER LII.

THEN all those assembled there, looking one into the other's face, drew a long breath.

They felt as spectators of an acted tragedy feel sometimes when the curtain drops on the closing scene, the lights are turned up, and things become comfortable and commonplace once more.

In very truth, although madness had shone in Mrs. Thorne's eyes, could be heard in her voice and seen in her every gesture, it was withal a madness so dignified, composed, methodical, they dared not think of her as some half-dazed, half-crazed lunatic, uttering wild ravings, but rather as some grand, tragic actress, who, carried away by intensity of emotion, over-did her part.

Uncle Hugh was the first to recover his powers of speech.

"Of course she is mad—utterly mad," he muttered; "but she won't be able to

find her carriage—nearly everyone seems going just now. I'd better see after her, I suppose;" and he forthwith departed, grumbling in his heart at himself all the way downstairs for having been such a fool, when he settled down a confirmed bachelor, not to have turned misogynist also, and kept clear of the female sex, one and all. "From Eve downwards, all the misery and discomfort in the world could be traced to their fingers," and so forth.

"Come, let us go, Edie," said Colonel Wickham, drawing Edie's arm within his. "I should say the flavour had gone out of the evening's entertainment now for you."

Edie hesitated only a moment to take one long steady look at Ellinor, who, white and silent, still stood within the smaller room exactly in the posture in which she had placed herself to receive Mrs. Thorne's maledictions. She was terribly unnerved—Edie could see that, and had to steady herself against a small table with her hand.

Phil stooped to pick up the two letters still lying at her feet, crumpling them in the palm of his hand as he did so.

"Give them to me," said Ellinor faintly; "I wish to keep them;" and in spite of Phil's demur she closed her trembling fingers tightly over them.

It was an odd situation—old loves, new loves, first loves, and last loves thus brought within a few inches of each other on the same square of carpet, each with a heart full of jarring, disturbing memories, each with a future so full of portent they could not bring themselves to look it in the face. An altogether overstrained situation for them one and all. Time, however, was not given them to lay stress upon it, for the music again paused, there came the rustling of skirts and tread of feet along the rooms and passages once more—a few stragglers wandered in at the farther door.

"Come, Edie," said Colonel Wickham once more; "the sooner we get away the better now."

Edie, with an effort, rose from her chair. For the moment her own heartaches seemed to sink into insignificance. Beside Mrs. Thorne's, indeed, they must have been as pin-pricks to sabre-cuts. Mad that bereaved mother might be—perhaps was—yet there was that in her madness which, to Edie's mind, at any rate, bore witness to the foundation on fact of those awful accusations she had brought against Ellinor.

Edie's movement seemed to act as a tonic on Ellinor. She made a huge effort—a visible one, for Edie could see the deep breath she drew, the tightening and clasp- ing of her hands together to stay their trembling. Then she came forward with as sweet and serene a smile as woman's lips could wear.

"It's 'How do you do' and 'Good-bye' in one breath, I'm afraid, is it not? I hope you have had a pleasant evening, Edie," she said, holding out her hand.

The time was getting so short now, not one opportunity would she let slip of triumphing over those who had lovers, and did not know how to keep them.

Also it behoved her to show, not only to Edie, but to everyone who had eyes wherewith to admire her, how little shaken she had been by Mrs. Thorne's wild denunciations and Lucy's abrupt departure.

Edie made no reply, did not offer to take the outstretched hand.

Friends of Colonel Wickham coming into the room at that moment, he was called upon to exchange civilities with them.

It was altogether a new experience to Ellinor to have her extended hand un- appreciated. Edie should pay for her obtuseness.

"I am afraid poor Mrs. Thorne's wild ravings must have scared you; you will be glad to get home, won't you? Shall I ask Phil to take you down to your carriage? Colonel Wickham seems engaged with his friends."

Not six months ago a speech of this sort would have brought forth a perfect hurricane of retorts from Edie's lips, or, at any rate, one that would have equalled a March north-east wind for its cutting bitterness; but to-night, somehow, Edie seemed careless alike of sarcasm or innuendo. Her face grew very white, very solemn; her eyes seemed full of a deep pitiful- ness.

"Poor Ellinor—poor Ellinor!" she said in low, strained tones. "From the bottom of my heart I pity you."

Her eyes wandered for just one moment from the beautiful, brilliant face confront- ing her to that of forlorn-looking Phil, who stood a little in the rear, moodily leaning against the mantelpiece, and she repeated once more with even a sadder accent than before:

"From the bottom of my heart I pity you!"

And in very truth at that moment it

seemed to the girl, as she thought of Rodney Thorne's death, of his mother's madness, of Phil's enthrallment, and her own empty heart, that the woman at whose door these sorrows were to be laid might well be pitied for the heavy reckoning that must be in store for her.

Ellinor drew back startled. Mrs. Thorne's denunciations had shaken her nerves; Edie's pity cut her to the heart.

Phil, looking up at that moment, saw thus standing face to face, his old love and his new one.

For one instant there came a tumultuous rush of old memories, hopes, longings. It seemed as though, in spite of everything, Edie must belong to him still, as though there and then he must get back possession of her, let who would say nay. But the next, Ellinor's beautiful eyes looking up into his had said "Back" to all the old hopes, memories, and longings, as one with enchanter's wand might say to the rough, encroaching waves that threatened to curl round his feet.

"Come, waltz with me," she whispered softly. "It will be my first waltz to-night—my last this year. Come!"

Edie spoke never a word during the short drive home, but when she kissed her good-night to her father she rather startled him by saying a little abruptly:

"I think after all, papa, you are right, and the sooner we get back to Stanham the better it will be. I don't mind if we pack up and set off to-morrow."

CHAPTER LIII.

THE extraordinary conduct of Mrs. Thorne at Miss Yorke's ball naturally was the subject of much comment, and received the usual amount of attention for the usual nine days. All sorts of wild rumours were afloat concerning it. That the lady was mad—hopelessly mad, everyone was ready to admit, and everyone agreed with everyone else that it was a pity some of the poor lady's intimate friends or relatives had not interfered and prevented her making an exhibition of herself. Of the exact reason for her disturbance of the harmony of Ellinor's ball, scarcely anyone seemed to have any distinct idea. Thanks to the intervention of Uncle Hugh and Colonel Wickham, very few of the guests had heard the half of what Mrs. Thorne had to say, and those who had heard the half, from their own imagination evolved another half, making a whole as unlike the real circumstances of the case as could well be imagined.

Concerning Lucy Selwyn, the wildest reports were spread abroad. Here people had to trust entirely to their powers of invention; very few were in possession of the facts of her real relationship to the dead Rodney. She had generally been supposed to be a companion to Miss Yorke, and a dependent on her bounty. Lucy's naturally timid, unassuming deportment had, no doubt, in the first instance, given rise to this idea. Now, by a sudden revulsion of opinion, she was set down to be an heiress whom Mrs. Thorne had destined for Rodney's wife, but who had somehow, through Ellinor's machinations, been cajoled from her destiny. So Mrs. Thorne had swooped down upon the pair, carried Lucy off, and given Ellinor "a piece of her mind."

These were some of the more connected of the many extravagant rumours that went the round of the clubs and drawing-rooms towards the end of that London season. In the nature of things they only reached the ears of the persons most concerned in the matter in disjointed fragments or whispered innuendoes. Even these fragments and innuendoes, minute as they were, disturbed Ellinor's peace of mind not a little.

Talked about she always had been—those who stand head and shoulders higher than the crowd must expect to be; also, no doubt, envious tongues had always been willing to spread abroad spiteful little stories about her and her doings. She had taken good care, however, by paying scrupulous attention to the conventionalities of life, never to give substance or colour to these spiteful little stories, and they had consequently died a natural death. But who, in the name of common-sense and reason could expect so easy and painless an ending to these reports which Mrs. Thorne had so absurdly emphasised by her wild extravagances? It was annoying and irritating to the last degree, more especially so at that time, with the programme she had sketched for herself only three parts played out. She grew morose, silent to all about her (except Phil), denied herself to all visitors, and began to think in her own heart that the sooner the last act in that programme was begun the better.

Far otherwise it was with Lucy Selwyn. She had not been brought up in a class of life that paid much attention to society's verdicts, good or bad. Also she had so much food for thought at that moment

that she had neither time nor ears to give to outside gossip.

In the space of about three minutes as many terrible and undreamed of revelations had been made to her. First had come to her the knowledge that Edie Fairfax was not such an one as she had imagined, and that consequently by ill-advised interference she had done her best to wreck the happiness of a true-hearted girl. Next had come the revelation of Rodney's treachery to herself, and the real cause of his awful death. And thirdly, and possibly worst knowledge of all, because more present and actual, was the fact that Ellinor, the one whom in all the world she most loved and trusted, was the woman who had been the cause of his treachery, and had participated in it. It was altogether awful, bewildering—too much even to shed tears over. It was the sort of thing to send a woman to her death-bed, it seemed to her. Possibly, if not to a death-bed, it might have sent her to a sick-room had it not been for Mrs. Thorne's serious condition at the moment, which withdrew her thoughts from herself and her sorrows, and absorbed every minute of her time.

Strangely enough, Mrs. Thorne, when she left Ellinor's doorstep, had ordered herself to be driven, not to Rodney's rooms, but to her own house in Eaton Square. Arrived there she had essayed to take Lucy upstairs to her room, had fallen in a fit on the lowest stair, and had with difficulty been restored to consciousness. The doctors called in had declared her condition to be critical, and had given numerous and minute orders as to her treatment, for the carrying out of which they looked to Lucy, as the only responsible person in the house.

As for Mrs. Thorne herself, she would not allow Lucy out of her sight, even for her meals. One fit followed another with a dangerous rapidity; they were generally preceded by periods of wild ravings, during which, to her disordered fancy, Rodney stood by her side and joined in her vehement denunciations of Ellinor's falseness. They were succeeded, as a rule, by quiet, sane intervals, when she insisted on giving instructions for the making of her will, supplementing them by many and minute verbal directions to Lucy, which she bound the girl with solemn promises to fulfil.

Lucy was to be her heiress, inheriting every penny she had the right to leave away from the Thorne Hall estate, and Lucy was to remain unmarried to the end

of her life, devoting herself, her time, her money, to Rodney's memory, to the erection of a memorial mausoleum, which was to surpass in beauty and grandeur anything and everything the world had ever seen, and to the carrying out of every one of her dead boy's wishes that she had ever heard him hint or speak, or could find trace of in his piles of manuscripts.

It was terribly pathetic, this iron-hearted mother so weak in her remorse and regrets!

It was heart-breaking, brain-bewildering to Lucy to have to stand there by her bedside, hour after hour, sole recipient of these tragic confidences.

But she knew just as well as did the doctors, who paid their daily visits, that the strain could not be for long, and that already the fiat had gone forth which would give to the poor distraught brain peace, and to the overtaxed heart everlasting quiet.

CHAPTER LIV.

EDIE went back to Stanham not quite the same Edie who had quitted it some three months previously. Her captiousness and nervous irritability had deserted her; she had grown thoughtful, silent, less inclined to keep up the appearance of the false gaiety on which at one time she had seemed to think her existence depended.

To say truth, she was asking herself a question or two just then which she found somewhat difficult to answer. Like all generous-minded persons, she was always willing to bear her share of the blame when things went awry, and now it seemed to her that a very large share of blame was her due for the course they had taken of late. The scene at Ellinor's ball had not only startled, pained, shocked her, beyond all description, but it had set her thinking, wondering, and asking herself uncomfortable questions, to which naught but uncomfortable answers could be given.

Question Number One, as might be expected, related to Phil and Phil's love-affairs, and demanded, with a rude, sturdy importunity that would not be silenced—would he have been taken captive by Ellinor and her numerous fascinations if she, little Edie, had not driven him—yes, absolutely driven him—there was no other word—from her side?

The only answer to this could be an unqualified and most positive "No."

Question Number Two brought Ellinor before her in all her beauty, her falseness, her coquetry. Well, she—little Edie—had

pronounced a whole chapter of denunciations on this woman for the way in which she led men on with her arts and wiles, and made them make love to her, just for the pleasure of saying "No" when they asked her to marry them. But was she sure that she herself ought not to come in for her share of such denunciations? Might she not, in very truth, had a judgment-seat been set, and had she been called to the bar of it, have been judged out of her own mouth?

There was Lord Winterdowne. It was true she had done her best in the end to save him the mortification of a refusal at her hands, but ought not that best to have been done in the beginning instead of in the end, and the man have been prevented from indulging hopes that could never be gratified?

And Colonel Wickham! "What about him?" demanded Conscience roughly, persistently. "You who had guessed at his early life and bitter disappointments, what right had you, least of anyone in the world, to make him play all over again that sad drama of younger days? If it were done from purely selfish motives to save yourself some slight personal annoyance, it was cowardly, mean, detestable; if from sheer thoughtlessness, it was only by one degree less culpable."

This last question weighed on Edie greatly. It sent her to bed every night with a heavy heart; it awoke her in the morning with the sense of guilt upon her conscience, and at last became so intolerable that it drove her to Colonel Wickham's side with something like a tear in her eye, saying:

"Colonel Wickham, will you spare me five minutes? I have something to say to you."

Colonel Wickham had not returned to Stanham with the Fairfaxes, but had lingered on in London a week or so to superintend the finish of his rotatory calculating-table. On his return to Wickham Place the said table had been installed with due honour in "Blue-book Parlour," and a message had been dispatched to the Squire asking him to come and inspect its merits. Edie had from her window watched her father going through the shrubbery on this errand, and she had watched him return arm-in-arm with the Colonel, engaged in energetic conversation. At the gate leading into the gardens of the Hall, the two gentlemen had parted, the Squire making his way into his stables to give some

necessary directions, and the Colonel going with slow, lagging footsteps back through the shrubbery to his own house.

Then it was that Edie had flown downstairs like a lapwing, skimmed over the sunshiny lawn—tilting her sun-bonnet over her nose as she went—and had got to Colonel Wickham's side with her tremulous question before he had so much as heard her footfall.

The Colonel looked a little surprised.

"Of course, my child, talk to me as long as ever you like, I am only too delighted to listen," he said kindly, standing still among the larches and nut-trees.

But Edie very much preferred walking on. It would be so much easier to say what she had to say side by side with the Colonel than right in front of him with his large eyes looking down into hers. So she went on ahead among the tangle and briar, the catch of a blackberry-bush giving her now and again the opportunity to pause and arrange her thoughts.

"It's about myself I want to talk this morning," she began a little timidly. "I have been very, very wretched lately—I don't know whether you know why?"

"I can see many reasons why you should not be so happy as you were some little time back, Edie."

"Oh, I don't mean that," said Edie hastily, guessing at once to what he referred; "I mean about something quite different—about myself, my own conduct, the way I've behaved lately to people—to you, especially, I mean."

"To me, child! What are you talking about?"

"Oh, I know what I'm saying. I've behaved horribly, abominably to you, and—and I want you to forgive me."

"Edie, Edie, there's some mistake here. What can I have to forgive you for? Why, we are always the best friends imaginable."

"Oh, dear, why don't you understand—why do you make me say it all out? I mean about being—being engaged—and—and—not being engaged. Don't you understand?"

"But, Edie, we talked all that out in London, you know, and it is now quite a thing of the past. Don't let us speak of it again. Come in and see my new table—it's a splendid little thing, as near perfection as can be; works to five places of decimals, and can be adjusted by a screw to any required height. Why, even you, Edie, could sit down and work out your rule of three by it."

Edie, however, was in no mood to talk about calculating-tables, let them be ever so near perfection. She ignored the latter half of his sentence, and brought out her next words with a rush.

"But it is not a thing of the past with me, and never will be, and I can't forgive myself, and—and— Oh, don't you see?"

Colonel Wickham paused in the middle of the long grass right in front of Edie, taking both her hands in his.

"Now—now, Edie, say no more about it, unless you want to give me real pain. It's all over and done with, don't you see? It was just one of little Edie's whims—nothing more, and we are all used to them by this time."

Edie struggled hard to free her hands.

"But it isn't over and done with—it need not be, I mean— Oh, why are you so dull? Why do men always make people say things right out? They never jump at things and understand them in a minute as women do without being told."

"Give me half your meaning, Edie, and let me see if I can jump at the other half—as women do."

And here the Colonel released her hands and let her walk on ahead as before.

But evidently even half the meaning was difficult to express, for Edie walked on in silence, stamping petulantly on the half-ripe nuts which the over-laden trees had here and there shaken to the ground.

They had reached the gate at the farther end of the miniature woodland before she opened her lips again.

"It was only this I had to say," she began, toying with the latch of the little gate as she spoke, "that if—if—if—you would like us to be engaged again—I mean really, honestly engaged—it should be as you wished."

Edie grew very white and forlorn-looking with her last word.

All the immensity of the sacrifice she was volunteering had come upon her as she had made her pitiful little speech. She knew her life must be an even more dismal thing than it promised now to be if the Colonel were to take her at her word. But there, that would concern no one but herself. The words were said, thank Heaven! and with the desire still strong upon her to make amends for the pain she had so unwittingly caused to her oldest, best friend, she resolved she would not go back from them.

The Colonel made no reply.

Edie grew frightened. Had she done

anything egregiously, outrageously wrong? she asked herself. He could not misunderstand her, surely? Ah, there was still something she had not said—something she had made up her mind to say when she was "screwing her courage to the sticking-point" that morning.

She went to the Colonel's side, laid her hand upon his arm, looking up sweetly and apologetically into his face.

"I think I ought to tell you—I'm sure you ought to be told," she said in a low, nervous voice, "that—that I haven't a whole heart to give you; that to the very end of my life if I tried my hardest, I couldn't get—get Phil out of it; but still——"

Colonel Wickham looked down into her white face pityingly.

"Edie," he said gravely, "I understand all—every word of what you want to say. You think you have something to make amends to me for, and in order to be very thorough in your amends, would make yourself and me miserable for life. Child—child! it is all a mistake from beginning to end. You've done me no wrong whatever, and therefore have nothing in the world to make amends to me for. Old hearts like mine, you know, get very flinty as time goes on, and require a hammer and chisel to make any mark upon them. So don't worry yourself any more on my account."

Edie's tears fell in a shower.

"If you forgive me, I can never, never forgive myself," she said.

Something of a smile—a wan, wintry sort of smile—flitted across the Colonel's face.

"Try, Edie," he said; "most things can be done by good, hard trying. Try to forgive yourself, and—may I say it?—try to forgive Phil too—believe me, he needs your forgiveness just now."

Edie gave a great start away from the Colonel's side, and stood a yard or so off, staring at him.

"I know what I'm saying," he went on. "I've asked an unconscionable thing of you, and now I am going to ask something still more outrageous. I am going to ask you to try and forgive Ellinor Yorke also."

Edie drew a long breath, and got back her powers of speech. She shook her head.

"I'm not at all Christian-like just now, and I can't forgive anybody. I can't forgive myself for all my wickedness from

beginning to end; I can't forgive Phil (though I pity him—oh, you don't know how much); I can't forgive Lucy Selwyn."

Now it was the Colonel's turn to start.

"Lucy Selwyn!" he exclaimed. "Why, Edie, what can she have done to injure you? You spoke to her for the first time at Miss Yorke's ball the other day!"

The words had escaped Edie unawares. Now she was bound to explain them.

"I mean," she said, hesitating a little, "I can't forgive her for the letter she wrote, asking me to give up Phil. There, it doesn't matter much; I dare say I should have done it, when I found how things were going on, without any asking."

"She wrote asking you to give up Phil!" repeated the Colonel musingly. "Ah, I see—I see;" and as he said this, a hundred thousand things, inexplicable before, began to explain themselves to him.

"Of course," Edie went on, getting her colour back, and speaking rapidly, "I don't feel so bitterly towards her as I do towards Ellinor. I may forgive Miss Selwyn in time, but Ellinor I never—never can forgive, so please don't ask me to do so."

"I do ask it. I repeat my request, Edie. She needs—she will need your forgiveness even more than the others. It will cost you a great effort; try to begin to make it at once."

Edie shook her head.

"It would be impossible. If I were to say I forgave her it would be all pretence. When I think of all the misery she has caused everybody, of that poor Rodney Thorne shooting himself, of his mother's madness and broken-heart, of even Lucy Selwyn's misery, it seems to me there never could have lived such a wicked, hard-hearted girl before. Sometimes—oh, often, I think the sooner she goes out of the world the better it will be for everyone left in it!"

"Edie, what if she be going out of the world a little faster than people think?"

Again Edie started in her astonishment. Then she found breath to say:

"Ellinor Yorke! Oh, impossible!"

"It is nevertheless true. It startled me terribly when I first heard it—through Phil. It was when I questioned him as to the when and how he intended to be married that he let out the truth that Ellinor's lungs are affected, and that she will not hear of marriage. I got it out of him with great difficulty. You must not

speak of it, Edie. But now tell me, do you not feel it makes it a little—little easier for you to forgive her the wrong she has done you and others."

"It makes it easier to forgive Ellinor, perhaps, but"—and here her small mouth set firmly—"a thousand times harder to forgive Phil, though I can't tell you exactly why."

She felt in her heart, though she could not put it into words, that there was a heavy load of condemnation to be borne by these two—that if Ellinor were to be remitted her share, Phil, of necessity, must carry a double load.

"Of course it will be hard—very hard for you, I know, child. The better you have loved him, the harder it is to forgive him. But, Edie, I am an old man now; and one or two things I have learnt as I have gone through life must be worth listening to, mustn't they?"

Edie bowed her head in assent.

"Very well, then listen to this little truth I have picked up by the way somehow, and try to act upon it. There is no peace, no real happiness in life for man or woman till they have acquired what we all so blandly attribute to God Himself—an endless capacity for forgiveness."

Edie did not speak for a minute or so. When, at length, her words came, they were wavering and slow. "I will try to forgive them all," she said; "but I won't promise you I shall succeed. The more I think of it the harder it seems to grow."

With her last word she turned her face towards the house.

And the man who had just owned to a heart so flinty it would "take a hammer and chisel to make any mark upon it," went back to his "Blue-book Parlour," thence into the little locked-up chamber beyond, watered his pot of mignonette, gave an upward sigh to the wishy-washy drawing hanging above it, and then stood for a good three-quarters of an hour staring dreamily out of the window, over the greenslopes and dells, in the direction of Stanham churchyard, where, among the drooping birches and willows, lay a grave that had not been opened for close upon twenty years.

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